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TAGS: [ELAB](#) [PGOV](#) [ES](#)

SUBJECT: VIOLENCE AND CONTROVERSY PLAGUE SALVADORAN UNION  
ELECTION

¶1. (U) Summary: Elections to name a new board of directors for the Salvadoran Institute of Social Security Workers Union (STISSS) ended in violence and controversy with both sides declaring victory on December 16. Police ended the violence, and the Ministry of Labor declared that the current secretary general, Ricardo Monge, won the election for a seventh term. His opponent, Javier Ayala was disqualified by the Ministry when Monge presented information claiming that Ayala had been expelled from the union. On December 20 media sources reported that one of the ballot boxes had been stolen and the election committee had invalidated the stolen ballots. According to media reports, this would result in a victory for Ayala. End Summary.

¶2. (U) On December 16, members of the Salvadoran Institute of Social Security Workers Union held annual elections to determine a new board of directors. As the final votes were being counted, violence erupted between followers of Ricardo Monge, leader of the Unity Movement, and Javier Ayala, leader of a rival group within the union. Police subdued the violence and held several union members, including Monge, for less than an hour. Reports also stated that police confiscated a gun from Ayala. No serious injuries were reported and no arrests were made. This is the second STISSS election to end in violence, and the current board of directors, led by Monge, has been accused of corruption and financial improprieties.

¶3. (U) In accordance with union registration requirements, Monge presented his credentials Ministry of Labor on December 17. Monge also presented information to the Ministry that claimed Ayala and several of his supporters had been expelled from STISSS in July 2007. Ayala was also expected to present his credentials to the Ministry, but did not appear. He continues to dispute claims of his expulsion to the press.

¶4. (U) On December 20, media sources reported that one of the ballot boxes had been stolen and that the 10 of the 15 members of the STISSS internal election commission had agreed to invalidate the votes from the stolen box. Of the remaining votes, the commission reported that Monge received 107 votes and Ayala received 181 votes.

¶5. (U) Comment: Although the Ministry of Labor continues to stand by its determination that Monge won the election, Ayala received a significant boost from the commission's decision to invalidate the missing votes. Even before the missing ballot box became public, Ayala had called for investigations by the Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman and the ILO. Once the government reopens in January, Ayala and the press will likely continue to press for an independent investigation.

¶6. (U) On a side note, immediately after the initial fracas,

Monge approached the press with allegations that Ayala had received support from the FMLN and was attempting to politicize the election; however the Ministry sought to downplay these claims. Monge also claimed that the violence was initiated by FMLN operatives who were not union members. Neither the police nor the Salvadoran Social Security Institute would confirm these allegations. End comment.  
Glazer